

NAUTICAL ALMANAC OFFICE,
BUREAU OF EQUIPMENT, NAVY DEPARTMENT,

WASHINGTON, May 4 , 1891.

Mr. Watson

Dear Sir,

Your letter
of the 2nd inst. is just received.

I feel quite certain that I collected the little fern and the bramble from the same place, near the entrance of a tunnel on Ascension. The only place where there is any vegetation on Ascension, except a prickly, yellow poppy and a dwarf mimosa shrub, is at Green Mountain. This mountain is nearly three ²⁴⁷² thousand feet high, and it catches the S. E. trade wind and pushes the damp air up until it expands and drops its moisture, so that there is usually a great deal of rain and damp weather on the mountain. In fact all the water used on the

island is the rain water collected here & stored in tanks. About four hundred feet below the summit of the mountain is a road, known as "Elliott's Pass," which encircles the peak; perfectly level, but very crooked, as it follows, generally the contour of the mountain. Sometimes, however, the road, instead of going around a spur is tunneled through. Some of these tunnels are quite short, twenty five or thirty feet; These short tunnels are lined, sides and roof with most delicate and beautiful ferns. In the longer ones the ferns grow in as far ^{only} as the daylight extends. It was at the entrance of one of these tunnels that I collected the *bramble*, which was the only specimen I saw, and I feel quite sure that the fern came from the same place, though I cannot see

how it came among the St. Helena plants.

Do you say any botanical collecting was a nice day, and I did not do so much as I fear I might have done. I fear

Sincerely yours

E. J. Downing